

**I. Preliminary Amendment**

Please amend the above identified application by deleting and adding material according to the following description, consideration of which is respectfully requested:

**A. In the Title:**

Please amend the title to read -A STORAGE SYSTEM FOR VEHICLES--.

**B. In the Claims:**

Please cancel pending claims 2-5, 10-12, 14, 24-48 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please add the claims as follows:

Sub 49. A storage system for a vehicle having a cargo area and a pair of side panels disposed on either side of the cargo area, the storage system comprising at least one storage area located intermediate the side panels and extending into the cargo area of the vehicle, and comprising:

at least one opening effective to expose the interior of the storage area;

at least one section of at least one of the side panels being hinged, the hinged section effective to provide access to the storage area therein.

Sub 50. The storage system of Claim 49, wherein the vehicle includes at least one pair of wheel wells, and wherein the at least one storage area extends over at least one of the pair of wheel wells.

51. The storage system of Claim 49, wherein the vehicle includes at least one pair of wheel wells, and wherein the at least one storage area extends forward and rearward from the pair of wheel wells.

52. The storage system of Claim 49, wherein the vehicle includes a floor and the at least one storage area is constructed to extend along at least a section of a floor of the vehicle.

53. The storage system of Claim 49, wherein the storage area is enclosed and the enclosed storage area includes a plurality of cooperating latch members mounted on the storage area and the at least one hinged section of the at least one side panel.

54. The storage system of Claim 49, further comprising at least one mechanism for retaining the at least one hinged section closed.

55. The storage system of Claim 49, wherein each side of the vehicle is provided with at least one storage area and at least one hinged section.

56. The storage system of Claim 49, additionally including at least one strut assembly operatively connected to retain the at least one hinged section of the side panel in an opened position.

57. The storage system of Claim 56, wherein the at least one strut assembly provides a temperature control during use, the control being insulation, heating, or heating and insulation.

58. The storage system of Claim 49, wherein at least one of the side panels includes more than one hinged section that is openable effective to expose the storage area.

59. The storage system of Claim 49, additionally including at least one drain/air relief valve assembly mounted in the at least one storage area.

60. The storage system of Claim 49, wherein the at least one storage area includes at least one of an adjustable shelf, a slideable shelf, a movable shelf, or a drawer.

61. A vehicle having a forward compartment for carrying a driver and an enclosure for passengers, merchandise or equipment wherein the enclosure is disposed to the rear of the driver compartment, and further wherein the enclosure is bounded by side panels and a rear wall,

including at least one rear door, the vehicle comprising at least one storage area adjacent at least one side panel and extending into the enclosure of the vehicle, and wherein at least one side panel includes a hinged section effective to provide an opening from the exterior of the vehicle into the storage area and a mechanism for securing the at least one hinged section in the closed position.

62. The vehicle of Claim 61, wherein the storage system is located intermediate the driver compartment and the rear door.

63. The vehicle of Claim 61, wherein the driver compartment includes side panels defining the width of the driver compartment and wherein the side panels of the enclosure are flush with the side panels of the driver compartment at the junction of the driver compartment and the enclosure.

64. The vehicle of Claim 63, wherein a storage system is mounted in the side panel of the enclosure on the driver's side of the vehicle.

65. The vehicle of Claim 63, wherein storage systems are mounted in the side panels of the enclosure on both sides of the vehicle.

66. The vehicle of Claim 61, additionally including one or more of hinged sections on at least one side of the enclosure, the hinged sections enabling access to at least a portion of the interior of the storage area.

67. The vehicle of Claim 61, wherein the enclosure is provided with at least one wheel well on each side thereof, and wherein a storage area is located forward or rearward of the wheel well.

68. The vehicle of Claim 61, wherein the enclosure is provided with at least one wheel well on each side thereof, and wherein a storage area is located over the wheel well.

69. The vehicle of Claim 67, wherein a hinged section is located entirely above the wheel well.

70. The vehicle of Claim 67, wherein a hinged section is located over the wheel well.

71. The vehicle of Claim 67, wherein a hinged section is located forward and rearward of the wheel well.

72. The vehicle of Claim 66, wherein one or more of the hinged sections is hinged horizontally.

73. The vehicle of Claim 61, additionally including at least one strut assembly operatively connected to retain the hinged section in an opened position.

74. The vehicle of Claim 73, wherein the at least one strut assembly provides a temperature control during use, the control being insulation, heating, or heating and insulation.

75. A vehicle having a bed and a storage system,  
the bed comprising:  
a cargo area;  
a floor;  
two side panels having exterior walls and interior walls adjoining opposite sides of the floor; and  
a rear wall configured to support a tailgate;  
the storage system comprising a storage area extending into the cargo area of the bed, the storage system comprising:  
at least one storage area having an opening located adjacent an exterior wall of one of the side panels ,

at least one portion of the side panel sections adjacent the storage area being hinged to enable access to the storage area from the exterior of the bed, and  
a mechanism for securing the hinged portion closed.

76. The vehicle of Claim 75, wherein the bed further includes at least one pair of wheel wells, and wherein the storage area extends over at least one of the wheel wells.

77. The vehicle of Claim 75, wherein the bed further includes at least one pair of wheel wells and wherein the storage area extends forward or rearward from at least one of the wheel wells.

78. The vehicle of Claim 75, wherein the storage area has a height equal to or less than a height of the side panels.

79. The vehicle of Claim 75, wherein each side of the bed is provided with the storage area positioned adjacent each of the side panel sections of the bed, and wherein one or more portions of the side panel sections adjacent the storage areas are hinged, the hinged sections providing access to the storage area.

80. The vehicle of Claim 75, wherein the storage area is provided with at least one shelf therein.

81. The vehicle of Claim 75, wherein the at least one hinged portion has a length substantially equal to the length of the side panel sections, and the side panel section is hinged horizontally at an upper end section thereof, the hinged portion providing access to the storage area.

82. The vehicle of Claim 75, additionally including at least one structure for retaining the hinged portion in an open position.

83. The vehicle of Claim 82, wherein the structure for retaining the hinged portion in an open position provides a temperature control during use, the control being insulation, heating, or heating and insulation.

84. The vehicle of Claim 75, wherein one or more of the side panel sections is provided with a plurality of horizontally hinged portions enabling access to the interior of the storage area.

85. A vehicle comprising a driver's compartment and a rear compartment, the rear compartment including a storage system, the rear compartment comprising:

a floor area bounded on either side by side panels with exterior surfaces defining the width of the rear compartment and at least one hinged section in the exterior surface of at least one of the side panels,

at least one storage area located intermediate the side panels, adjacent the at least one hinged section, and extending into a cargo area of the vehicle, wherein the hinged section is configured to provide access to the storage area when the hinged section is in the open position;

a latch for retaining the at least one hinged contoured side panel section in the closed position; and

a strut for retaining the hinged section in the open position.

86. The vehicle of Claim 85, wherein the at least one hinged section is hinged to open outwardly.

87. The vehicle of Claim 85, wherein the strut provides a temperature control to the storage area by insulating, heating, or heating and insulating the storage area.

88. The vehicle of Claim 85, additionally including at least one drain/air relief valve assembly mounted in the at least one storage area.

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89. The vehicle of Claim 85, wherein the vehicle includes at least one the hinged section in each of the contoured side panels and at least one the storage area located adjacent the hinged sections.

90. The vehicle of Claim 85, wherein the rear compartment comprises a pickup bed.

91. The vehicle of Claim 85, wherein the rear compartment comprises a passenger compartment.

92. The vehicle of Claim 85, wherein the rear compartment comprises a cargo area.

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93. The storage system of Claim 49, wherein the exterior surfaces of the side panels are flush with the exterior surfaces of the driver's compartment.

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94. A vehicle comprising a driver's compartment and a rear compartment, the rear compartment including a storage system, the rear compartment comprising:

a floor area bounded on either side by side panels with exterior surfaces defining the width of the rear compartment and at least one hinged section in the exterior surface of at least one of the side panels,

at least one storage area located intermediate the side panels, adjacent the at least one hinged section, and extending into a cargo area of the vehicle, wherein the hinged section is configured to provide access to the storage area when the hinged section is in the open position;

a latch for retaining the at least one hinged contoured side panel section in the closed position; and

a strut for retaining the hinged section in the open position, wherein the strut provides a temperature control to the storage area by insulating, heating, or heating and insulating the storage area.

95. The vehicle of Claim 94, wherein the rear compartment comprises a pickup bed.